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Tape Transcript

Address to the Life Sciences Symposium
by Admiral Stansfield Turner
Director of Central Intelligence
11 April 1980

I apologize to you for missing my appointment with your for one o'clock. I have been in an almost non-stop meeting since this morning downtown, and I am due back at three o'clock. You would think we could run the government without so many meetings, but this does seem to be a time of considerable stress. And, it is very important that we get together and makes sure all our views are brought forward. I believe it is very important for us in the intelligence community to be present and participate in the decision-making meetings that are going on from time to time with all the problems that are going on around the world. Hopefully, we can bring to it a non-biased, non-policy oriented outlook that will help ensure that the top people get a full spectrum of advice. Considerations which may not fit with someone's policy, and which although they may not deliberately hide them may not necessarily come out in his policy-oriented organization, come to the fore. I think we are doing a good job on that, we are certainly trying.

Being able to have meetings like this with people like yourselves are helping us to expand our horizons. It is very important in that process to ensure that we are not bound in by being part of a policymaking process of the government. We are bounded by being

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human beings in an organization that begins to get its own character and its own outlook. I am grateful to you for being here. The area you are working in is one that many of us know far too little about and we need to expand our horizons.

Yesterday I gave a speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors and I dwelled on change as the only constant in the intelligence world. Technical change is very much with us in how we collect information. It continues to progress with a rapid pace, particulary the quantity of data that we now gather from our electronic intercept and photographic systems and so on. It puts a real challenge on us to know how to utilize it.

The second form of change which I happened to emphasize with the Newspaper editors is the great change in the environment in which American intelligence works today. Five or six years ago, I said to them, we weren't on your front pages, we are now. The Church Committee, Rockefeller Commission, the establishment of an extensive oversight process in the Executive and Legislative Branches, today and it really does change very much the way we operate.

It changes us internally, here in the Central Intelligence Agency. We have got to be less compartmented and have our decisionmaking process a more corporate process so that we don't make any mistakes with our righthand and lefthand. Here we have to do that while we keep secrets, some of it very secret. It is a challenge to us to find that right balance.

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Change as to how we work in the Executive Branch. I can't tell you how much more interface, I believe, there is today. Every time we make a major move in intelligence with the State Department, the NSC Staff, Department of Defense and others than there was before. It serves a good purpose. Yet, it has that same shortcoming, can we now keep this secret. We have much more interface with the Congress because they are very much a part of the oversight process. We get a lot of benefit out of dealing with the Congress. We find out what they want, what the country wants out of us. They actually share some of our responsibilities. We tell them about something we are going to do, they can't tell you it was a bad idea when it bombs out, they have a little more trouble complaining. It is helpful to get advice from them because they are semi-detached from our activities.

The last thing I mentioned to the newspeople was the fact that we really have a lot of interface with the public through the news media today. Again, the secrecy problem is very much with us. That is why you read in the papers that we are going to the Congress to ask for release from the Hughes-Ryan Amendment, makes us notify 8 committees of Congress when we take a covert action; partial release from the Freedom of Information Act and, legislation to be able to prosecute people like Philip Agee who just go out and undermine our activities. I made a point to them and I'd like to be sure you understand it and that is, look at those three things we are asking for. None of them are what are build in the newspapers as an

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unshackling of the CIA. It is a step toward a modicum of secrecy, legitimate secrecy but it isn't like something they say, back to the good old days whatever they were. It isn't turning us loose to do a lot of things we haven't been able to do. It is enabling us to do the constituted activities without so much risk. This is a major change. Trying to have an oversight process which to some extent involves the public, to a larger extent the Congress and to an even larger extent the other agencies of the Executive Branch, when, in the past and in most intelligence services there isn't nearly that much checking. I think it can be done, but we are at a delicate balance right now and to go much further with the risk of compromise and exposure we won't be able to carry on much of the activities that we must.

The third form of change that I mentioned yesterday was the so much broader scope that we are required to report on. Perhaps 20 or 30 years ago we were largely Soviets, largely militarily oriented, today we are all over the globe. Today, military intelligence is extremely important, but so too, the economic, political, anti-terrorism and life sciences. In the point of fact I have spent a lot of time in the last 3 years asking the question where should we be expanding, developing the techniques of intelligence to meet the needs of the country in the 1980's and 1990's. I have harped a great deal on food supply, and population. We don't know as much about some of the more esoteric areas of life science, like parapschology. I have talked to Mr. McDonald about it and have done some work. There are

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many other areas and this kind of a forum to explore that and to generate through our system so that we can decide where to try to develop resources, where to invest the day in some young graduates who will come in and provide for us over the long run the foundation of expertise which is extremely important. The very fact that I am so late being with you and only going to be able to stay for a half-hour instead of an hour is indicative of how we get so wrapped up in the day-to-day. In a forum like this to makes us focus, I hope, on the importance of the areas you have been discussing so we can put them into balance with ICBM's, lasers and other things that are our stock-in-trade, then find what is the proper niche for these areas of expertise so that we don't find ourselves wanting when the time comes that they are really high on the national agenda.

I would like to stop here and just engage in some dialogue with you for the next 17 minutes. Not only to respond to your questions, but mainly to hear your comments and suggestions in particular where in the areas you have been discussing, you think I should pay more attention concerning the intelligence community in building for the future.

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Admiral Stansfield Turner
Director of Central Intelligence
Address to American Society of Newspaper Editors
10 April 1980

Introduction for Life Sciences Symposium

- Add my welcome to those you have already received.
- This symposium - Important because it brings together the best thinkers in the field of life sciences - in and outside government - to address questions of common concern and of singularly great importance to this nation.
- This is - in my opinion - the epitome of how this nation's talent should join forces for the good of the country.
- As my contribution, perhaps it would be useful for me to try to put what you are doing into the broader context of the many changes which are occuring to influence American intelligence work.

Change is the one constant in the intelligence profession today. Technological advances are revolutionizing intelligence work, just as world events are changing and broadening its focus. This is no different for us than it is for you.

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LIFE SCIENCES

In the area of life sciences, we have greatly expanded our interest in world population growth, the dwindling food supply, and the economic pressures being experienced universally today. Life sciences will play a critical role in solving these problems, and I believe this Agency must be at the forefront of that vital work. We can no longer afford the luxury of the normal time lag between basic research and application. I hope our deliberations here will result in a continuing dialogue, especially in matters which take us through these unchartered waters.

But the change I would like to talk about today is the vast change in the environment in which we must work. A change of which you are an important part.

In the past, American intelligence activities were largely isolated and secret, like those of other nations. Since 1975, with the Church Committee, the Pike Committee, the Rockefeller Commission; with new oversight by the Congress, the White House, and the Intelligence Oversight Board, we are on your front pages all the time. The result is that today the intelligence profession must adapt so that it can be more open with the public, yet control that openness so that we can still do our job effectively.

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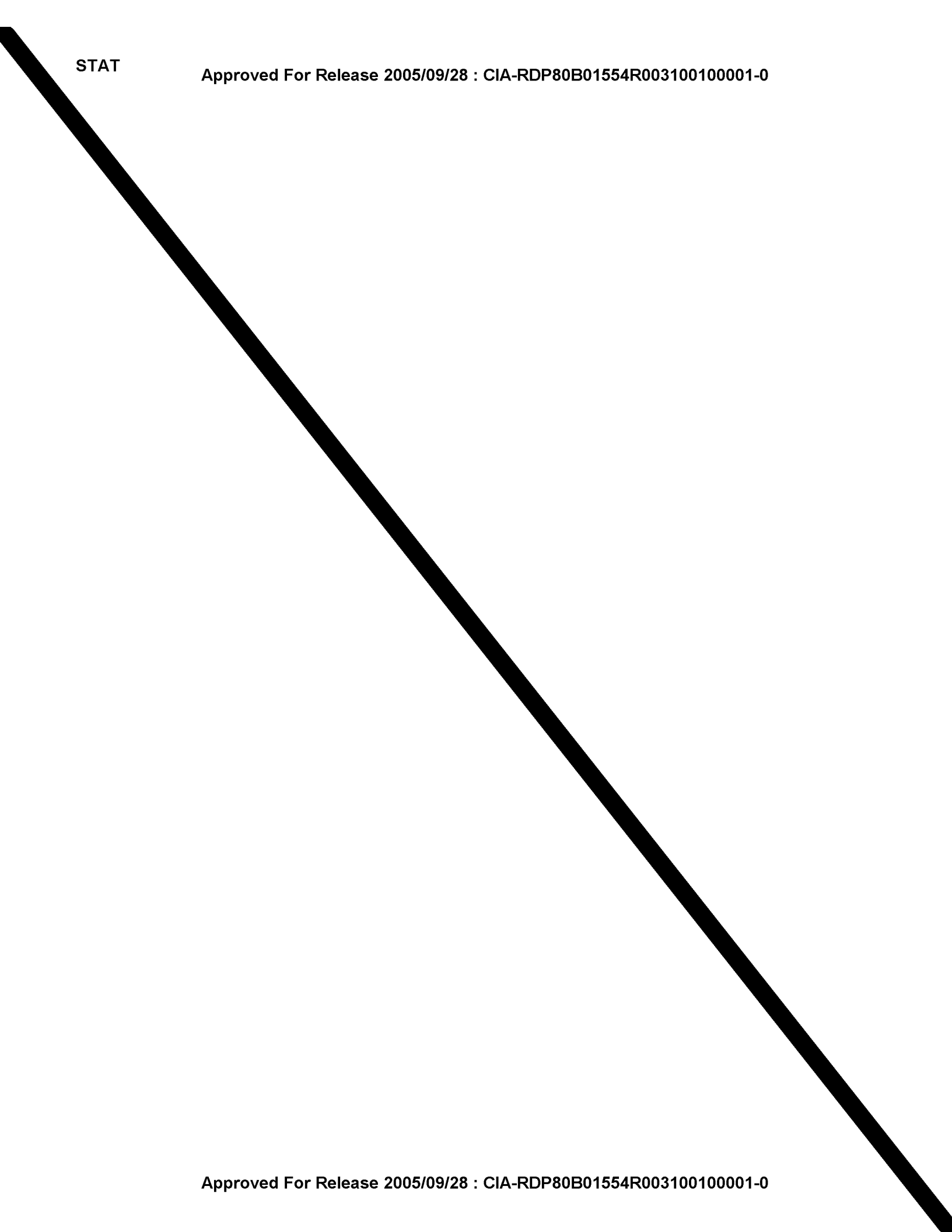

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